

# Westboro Baptist Church: The Face of Evil

✘ I recently read a very interesting book entitled, “The Rite,” written by an Italian journalist who accompanied a modern-day exorcist, Fr. Gary Thomas, during his training in Rome. (I haven’t seen the movie.)

In the book, one of the parishioners asks the priest not to discuss evil spirits and demonic possession during his sermon because it was “frightening the kids.” I found that very odd because, when I was growing up in the Catholic Church, the subjects of good and evil, Heaven and Hell, sin and the like were essential elements and commonplace in my life.

There’s no doubt in my mind evil exists. I’m also aware that some people don’t believe there’s such a thing. But I’ve worked in the area of child abuse and neglect for over 20 years and there’s no other explanation. I’ve seen things most people couldn’t imagine in their worst nightmares. I seldom talk about my work because most people can’t believe the horrific things that have been done to children. There’s definitely something evil about those who harm children and I never forget the words of Jesus, “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.” In other words, don’t mess with the children.

After all I’ve seen, I’m still shocked when I read something that can only be described as evil. I haven’t become immune and that’s a good thing.

Just this week, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the vile Westboro Baptist Church. I deliberately chose not to accompany this article with a photo of its founder, Fred Phelps, or a picture of the disgusting signs these people carry at military

funerals. You can google those yourself. What these horrible people claim is that the deaths of our brave men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan are God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality and abortion.

The Supreme Court case resulted from a judgment obtained by the father of one of those courageous fallen heroes, Matthew Snyder, who was killed in Iraq in 2006. Matthew's father sued these vile creatures for emotional distress when he attempted to bury his heroic son in peace but was disrupted by these "church-goers" bearing signs such as "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" and "Thank God for 9/11." He won a substantial judgment at the state level which was overturned on the federal appellate level citing the Church's First Amendment grounds. He took it to the Supremes.

The Supreme Court, in an 8-1 decision (Justice Samuel Alito dissented), found that the First Amendment protects these "church members" despite the pain they cause grieving families.

Let me say that I haven't read the court documents or the entire decisions from the appeals court or the Supreme Court, so I won't comment on the legal arguments made or the Court's decision.

I'm talking, instead, of the despicable behavior exhibited by these people. It's easy to dismiss the WBC members as nuts, whack-jobs and loons, but I, for one, think the problem is far worse than just being misguided or crazy. I truly believe these people are evil.

What I will say is that I honestly believe our Founding Fathers could not have even imagined this kind of behavior or would have condoned this type of display at military funerals under any circumstances.

I don't get how someone reaches a point in their life to become so warped in one's thinking to behave in such a

manner. To deliberately cause the kind of pain and suffering to our military families – who have already made the ultimate sacrifice – is beyond my comprehension. I'll leave that to the theologians and psychologists but I must say I do take solace when I hear my husband say, "There's a special place in Hell for people like this."

Fortunately, the families of those massacred in Tucson were spared WBC's unholy presence at their loved ones' funerals. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed emergency legislation that barred protests within 300 feet of a funeral and within an hour from its beginning or end.

Without further legislation similar to that enacted in Arizona, and with the Supreme Court decision in hand, the WBC is now empowered to continue their disgusting displays of protest. But just because something is legal, doesn't make it right. And, in this case, the so-called "Church" and its members are just plain evil.

For the time being, I do have the perfect antidote. I look into the innocent faces of my six grandnephews and nieces and all the evil in the world disappears. And that is a blessing.